

# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

AUGUST 2006

TWO DOLLARS







Colonel W. Gerald Massengill  
Interim Director



As you can see from this issue of *Virginia Wildlife* magazine, hunting season is just around the corner. My thanks go out to all the wildlife biologists who helped prepare the fall hunting forecasts, which look promising!

Another highlight of this upcoming season is the addition of two new wildlife management areas open for hunting. The 2,800-acre Featherfin WMA is located approximately 10 miles west of Farmville, in Prince Edward, Appomattox and Buckingham counties. Cavalier WMA in Chesapeake is a 3,800-acre tract located approximately 2½ miles east of the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. This brings our total public hunting lands up to more than 200,000 acres. Add to that, our National Forests and special managed hunts at Virginia State Parks, and the Old Dominion is a great place to hunt, with not only rich traditions but also exciting new opportunities.

All these sites are included in our new Find Game program, an interactive, Web-based map viewer, which allows hunters, with just a click of a mouse, to search by game species and/or location to find places to hunt. This tool was developed to assist new as well as seasoned hunters. The Find Game program will be demonstrated at the Virginia Outdoor Sportsman's Show, August 11-13, at The Showplace here in Richmond.

Also in August, we begin accepting applications for the Department's man-

aged hunts, for adults and youth. Visit our Web site at [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov) to print off applications and to use Find Game.

While you're buying your hunting license at the Sportsman's Show, or at any of our license agents statewide, consider contributing dollars as well as deer to the Hunters for the Hungry program. They continue to need your support to make a big difference in the lives of less fortunate families in Virginia.

Safety should be foremost in our minds when we prepare to go out on the water or afield to hunt. A good way to brush up on safe practices and your hunting skills, as well as the latest in hunting regulations, is to attend one of our free Hunter Education classes. It's also a good way to introduce others to hunting because Hunter Education covers how to be a safe and ethical hunter. In addition, the classes offer a network to meet other hunters and find opportunities for places to hunt on private lands as well as public. Find a class near you by visiting our Web site.

Now more than ever, with our busy schedules and life's demands, it's important to make time to enjoy the outdoors with family and friends. We at the Department are working every year to make your outdoors experience much more fulfilling by creating more opportunities and more access. We hope you are able to take advantage of our work and spend some time in our great outdoors!

#### Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation; to promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing.

*Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources*

Commonwealth of Virginia  
Timothy M. Kaine, Governor

## L HUNTING & FISHING ICENSE FEE S

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million hunter days of recreation and contributes a sizable amount to state's economy each year. Hunting has been and remains the most effective and efficient method available for managing deer populations. Hunters may take deer during the archery, muzzleloading and general firearms seasons.  
©John R. Ford



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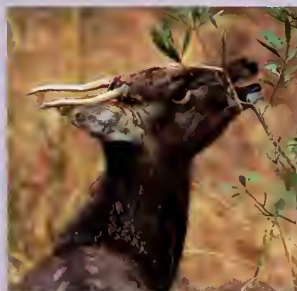
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# Virginia's Fall Hunting Forecast

The Department's wildlife biologists give their forecast and cover last year's harvest as hunters gear up for another exciting fall of hunting in the Commonwealth.

by Marc N. McGlade

**H**unters that are chomping at the bit hope that this year is again another banner one for them afield. Living in Virginia, there is always excitement and anticipation for the upcoming hunting season. In this comprehensive forecast, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) wildlife biologists share data regarding last year's harvest and what hunters can expect this fall.

Big game, small game and waterfowl abound in Virginia, and hunters who do their homework in pre-season scouting can feel confident about adding some meat to the freezer when summer turns to autumn this year.

Predicting hunting forecasts is a difficult chore, particularly when forecasts are given well in advance. Think about the weather forecasters when they attempt to give the weekend skinny on Monday morning, predicting five days out—they often miss the mark. Wildlife biologists put their necks out on the line, hoping



**Whether you're hunting waterfowl along the Virginia coast or placing your sight on a Blue Ridge buck, hunters should find themselves knee deep in good hunting this year.**

their insight is accurate, knowing the weather could blow their predictions out of the water.

Nonetheless, they are adept at

understanding wildlife behavior and trends, and the following accounts are their educated predictions for this upcoming fall season.



## Big Game: Whitetails, Easterns and Bruins

### White-tailed Deer

"During the 2005 deer season, 214,675 deer were reported killed by hunters in Virginia," says Matt Knox, the deer program supervisor in Forest. "This total included 100,927 antlered bucks, 20,357 button bucks and 93,391 does (representing 43.5 percent). The 2005 kill figure represents a 3 percent decrease from the 221,492 deer reported killed in 2004. However, it is 4 percent greater than the past decade average of 206,900 deer killed annually."

Knox says archers—not including crossbow hunters—killed 17,291 deer. The 2005 bow kill increased 8 percent from the 16,055 deer taken by archers in 2004, and comprised 8 percent of the total deer kill.

Smokepole deer hunters killed 49,356 deer. The 2005 muzzle-loader kill increased 1 percent from the 48,797 deer taken in 2004. Muzzle-loading comprised 23 percent of the total deer kill.

"Deer-kill levels were down 13 percent in the northern mountains; up 1 percent in the northern Piedmont; down 11 percent in the southern mountains; down 2 percent in the southern Piedmont; and up 6 percent in Tidewater," Knox reports.

Crossbows, he says, which were legal for all deer hunters for the first time in fall 2005, accounted for 5,476 deer, or 2.5 percent of the total deer kill. Knox indicates more than 108,600 deer (almost 51 percent) were checked using the Department's telephone checking system last fall.

"Tidewater deer-kill levels have been remarkably stable, averaging

between 40,000 and 52,000 for more than a decade," he says. "The biological data indicate the deer herd condition is fair to good."

Stable deer populations and deer-kill levels are predicted for the upcoming fall, Knox says. If the deer kill is up, it should be because of increased female deer-kill numbers.

The northern Piedmont deer kill was 45,175 in 2005, an increase of

duced. Deer population indices have demonstrated significant increases in Loudoun, Madison, Orange and Prince William counties over the past decade or so. Increasing deer populations in Loudoun and Prince William are especially troubling given the fact that the Department's deer management objective in both counties has been to reduce the deer population."

The biological condition data in-



**Above:** This impressive 28-point buck, taken by Keith Boyer in Prince Edward County, is a prime example of where strong genetics and good habitat combine to produce big deer.

**Right:** Patience and a good knowledge of the area you're hunting are two key tips for having a successful hunt. Learning to sit still and not move, along with being observant of your surroundings takes practice. Knowing what food sources are available for the game you are hunting and where to find it is like finding a treasure map of good hunting spots.

only 1 percent from 2004. According to the biologist, this might be good news. Hopefully, he adds, female deer-kill levels are at or approaching the point required to stop the growth of the deer herd.

"Increasing and record deer kills in this area are not good," he says. "Two surveys conducted by the Department over the past decade have clearly indicated that the majority of citizens in Northern Virginia would like to see the deer population re-



dicates that overall deer herd quality in the northern Piedmont is good, Knox explains. With the exception of the counties noted above, stable deer populations and antlered buck-kill levels are predicted for the upcoming fall.



According to the biologist, the southern Piedmont remains two distinct deer management areas, split between the southwestern and south-central Piedmont.

"In 16 south-central Piedmont counties, liberal either-sex deer hunting day regulations of the late 1980s and early 1990s resulted in reduced deer herds," he says. "These reduced deer herds resulted in more conservative either-sex deer hunting regulations in the mid to late 1990s with the objective to let the deer herds recover. That recovery is now complete, and more liberal firearms season either-sex deer hunting day opportunities have been adopted in this area for fall 2006. Deer-kill numbers

ulation increases have been seen in Amherst, Bedford, Campbell, Nelson and Patrick counties.

"Herd condition indicates the deer herd quality in the southern Piedmont is good," Knox says. "In most areas, stable deer populations and antlered buck-kill levels are predicted for the upcoming fall. If the deer kill is up, it should be because of increased female deer-kill numbers. However, over the long term, in response to high and increased female deer-kill levels, it is hoped that the deer kill in this region will decline in the future."

West of the Blue Ridge, the deer kill was 68,128 in 2005, down 12 percent from 2004. Knox says the mountain deer-kill levels should stay in the 70,000 range or lower in the coming years.

"It will not surprise many western public land deer hunters, but fall 2004 and fall 2005 were back-to-back the worst deer-kill seasons on public lands in over a decade," he states. "What's going on is complex, and there are probably several factors at work including habitat quality, decreased hunting pressure, predators, and, most importantly, liberalized private land regulations."

The northern mountain deer kill was 33,302, representing a decrease of 13 percent from 2004. Liberal regulations over most of this area appear to not only have controlled herd growth, but also reduced deer herds over most areas. The deer herd condition in this area is among the worst in the state. Weights and antler development are poor, and a distinct browse line can be seen over much of this area. With the exception of Alleghany, Bath and Highland counties, deer-kill levels in this area should be stable to down.

The southern mountain deer kill was 34,826, down 11 percent from 2004. This region is evolving into two or three different deer management situations. First, Knox says, very conservative deer seasons and regulations have been successful in significantly increasing deer herds over the past decade in the three coalfield counties of Buchanan, Dickenson and Wise. It should be noted that

these are the only counties in the state where the Department has been trying to increase deer herds.

Knox concludes by saying the 2006-2007 deer season should be good across most of Virginia. Because of three consecutive years of record female deer-kill levels, total deer-kill levels should be expected to decline. Deer-kill totals below the past decade's average of 207,000 are expected soon and consistently. Deer-kill totals below the 200,000 mark would not be unexpected.

## Wild Turkey

Diehard eastern wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*) hunters, who call Virginia home, have hand-



**What could be better than receiving your very first shotgun from your grandfather? Well how about taking a 21-point buck with that same gun with only 15 minutes left during last year's deer season. That's just what eighth grader Brandon Ridout, of Matoaca, did while hunting with his father Ricky.**

in this area should be stable to slightly increasing for the next several years."

Knox adds that the deer management situation in the southwestern Piedmont (those counties west of the dog line and east of the Blue Ridge) still needs work. Liberal regulations over the past decade have failed to control deer herds, he says, and, over the past decade or so, significant pop-



**Clarksville hunting guide, Steve Tollerson, recommends revisiting your spring hunting hot spots in the fall. Big gobblers tend to be territorial in nature. When one dominant bird leaves another will often move in, staying in the area throughout the year.**

picked a good place to live. Good numbers of gobbling birds were heard on early spring gobbling routes in western Virginia before the 2006 spring gobbler season, says Gary Norman, the forest game bird project leader in Verona.

"This may indicate good numbers of breeding birds and offers the potential for significant population increases if reproduction is favorable," he explains. "Reproduction



has been below average for the past several years, and the turkey population has stalled at current levels. Many factors can affect reproduction in wild turkeys; our research has shown that weather can have many different influences at different times throughout the spring and summer."

Norman adds that an early spring can be helpful to nesting birds that need the spring vegetation to meet the energy demands of egg-laying and incubation. However, rainfall during incubation periods can be detrimental to recruitment. Predators may be more effective locating nesting birds under good scenting conditions following rainfall events. Young turkey poults are also susceptible to extended cold and wet conditions.

"The brooding hen can generally protect many of the brood with her outstretched wings," Norman says. "Generally, inclement weather is less problematic when the poults are very young, but as they grow in size, the number of young that can take refuge under their mother's wings becomes more limited. The young chicks feed frequently and almost exclusively on insects. Dry conditions during the summer can result in lower insect populations which can also be detrimental to turkey poults."

Norman recommends fall turkey hunters take advantage of the new Saturday opening day of the season.

"This is an effort by the Department to increase opportunity for hunters to take advantage of Old Dominion turkey populations," he states. "Fall turkey hunters should scout and search for acorn crops, which is one of the turkeys' favorite foods. Turkeys select acorns based on size and generally prefer white oak acorns. Wild grapes are another favorite fall food. Grasses and other vegetative material make up a significant part of their diet if acorn crops fail."

Norman and his colleagues at the Department estimate the wild turkey population in Virginia to number approximately 140,000 to 150,000 birds. Population densities, he says, vary by region with the highest populations in the south mountain and Tidewater regions.

He recommends Fairystone Farms and Goshen-Little North Mountain wildlife management areas (WMA) as good turkey destinations for fall hunters.

### Black Bear

During the 2005-2006 hunting season, 1,439 black bears (*Ursus americanus*) were reported killed by hunters, Virginia's second highest annual harvest. This harvest represents an increase of 27 percent from the previous year's harvest of 1,130. However, it is 5 percent lower than the record kill of 1,511 in 2003.

"The total included 870 males (60 percent) and 569 females (40 percent)," says Denny Martin, VDGIF's black bear project leader.

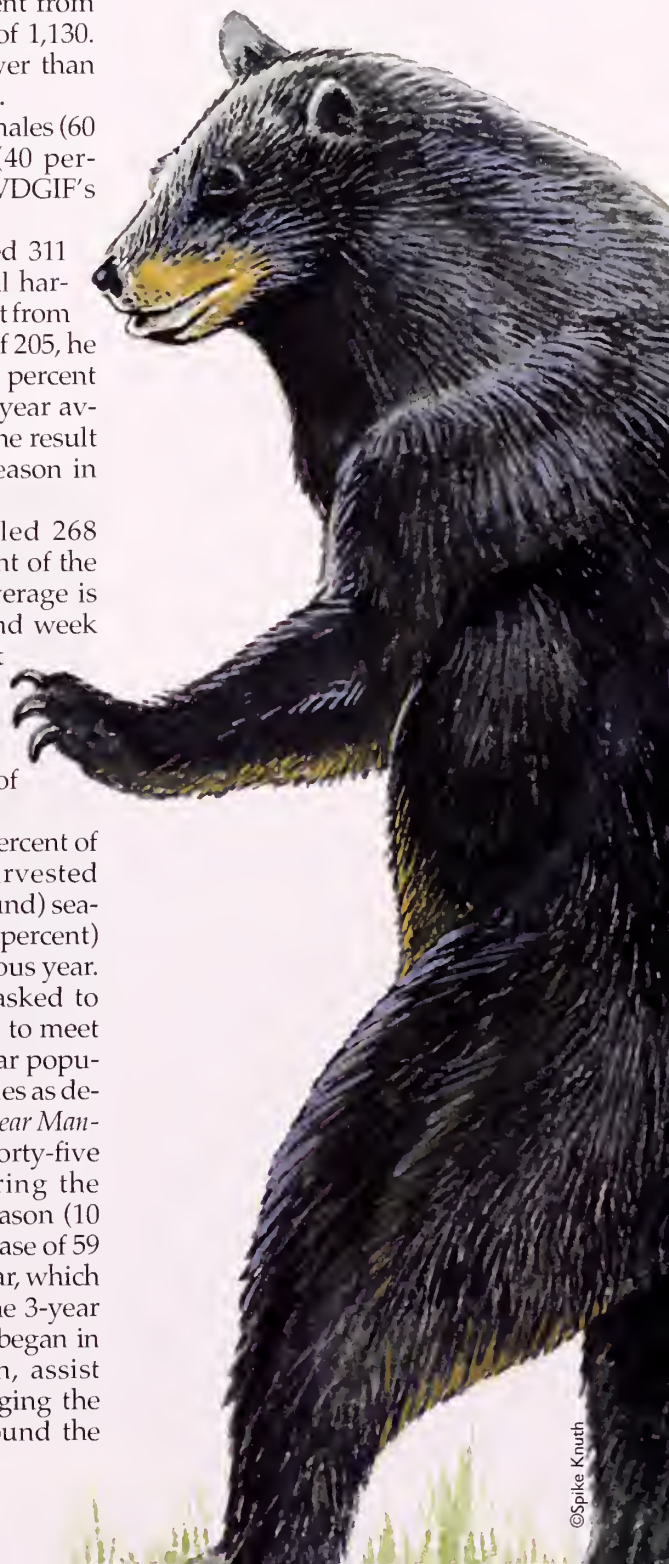
Archery hunters arrowed 311 bears (22 percent of the total harvest), an increase of 52 percent from the previous year's harvest of 205, he says. The archery kill was 5 percent higher than the previous 37-year average of 17 percent, in part the result of expanding the archery season in 2003.

"Firearms hunters killed 268 bears, representing 17 percent of the total harvest (the 37-year average is 30 percent) during the second week of the deer-gun season (first week of the bear-gun season)," Martin says. "That's a decrease of 13 percent from the previous year's harvest of 308."

A total of 715 bears (50 percent of the total harvest) were harvested during the dog-hunting (hound) season, an increase of 189 (36 percent) from the 526 killed the previous year. Bear-hound hunters were asked to increase the harvest of bears to meet the goal of stabilizing the bear population in northwestern counties as described in the *Virginia Black Bear Management Plan*. One hundred forty-five bears were harvested during the four-day muzzle-loading season (10 percent of the total), an increase of 59 percent over the previous year, which is 17 percent greater than the 3-year average of 124. This season began in 2003 to increase recreation, assist wildlife managers in managing the bear population in and around the

Shenandoah National Park (SNP) and to help address property damage by bears.

"Harvest west and east of the Blue Ridge Mountains totaled 1,118 (78 percent of the total harvest) and 321 (22 percent of the total harvest) respectively, an increase of 22 percent and 51 percent from the previous year," Martin explains. "Forty per-





cent (10-year average is 48 percent) of the harvest (577) came from the eight counties that contain the SNP, an increase of 24 percent compared to the previous year. Similar to the 2004-05 bear hunting season, 7 percent (98 bears) of the statewide kill came from areas of the state that were newly opened in 2003, while the traditionally hunted areas of the mountains in western Virginia and around the Dismal Swamp accounted for 93 percent of the total harvest (1,341 bears)."

Martin says the most important food source in the southern Appalachians is acorns. White oaks are usually more attractive to wildlife, but they are less consistent producers. Possibly the most consistent acorn producing oaks are bear and scarlet oak, the former being found in higher altitudes in mountainous counties. Virginia conducts three separate mast surveys and possibly has the most comprehensive and longest running surveys in the country. One survey was begun in 1959. It is impossible at this writing to predict mast production during the summer and fall.

According to Martin: "Hickory nuts, dogwood berries, choke cherries, black gum berries, blueberries, huckleberries, wild grapes and other fruit will provide abundant calories for bears and other wildlife earlier in the year when acorns are not available."

The oak mast production during 2005 was rated fair to good in western counties, but poor in most eastern areas. More cubs are born during years when mast production, both soft and hard, is moderate to high. Acorn production in 2004 was rated as good in many western areas; consequently, cub production and cub survival would be expected to be higher during the winter and spring of 2005. Furthermore, the winter of 2005 was reasonably mild. These cubs will be two year olds for the 2006-2007 hunting season. Depending on weather conditions and other factors, the number of bears that are 100 pounds or more, that will be available to hunters, should be slightly higher this coming season.

Excellent table fare and highly

sought after as the premier Virginia game animal, Martin states that the black bear population continues to increase in all but a few eastern counties. The Department made recent regulation changes in part to address high population issues, particularly in those counties containing the SNP.

Female bears (sows) commonly weigh 100 to 200 pounds, but have been known to get as large as 300 pounds. Males (boars) are normally larger and will usually weigh 150 to 300 pounds, but may tip the scales at more than 500 pounds.

The bear expert says the Rapidan WMA-bordering SNP in Greene and Madison counties is the only public hunting lands available that border SNP. Most hunting lands around SNP are private property, he points out. However, private landowners often grant archery hunters and some gun hunters access to hunt this bear-rich region.

A healthy population of bears exists in and around the Great Dismal



©Gregory J. Pels

Swamp National Wildlife Refuge area, too. This is a component of a large bear population in eastern North Carolina.

### **Small Game: Cottontails, Bushytails, Bobwhites and Grouse**

Patrick Cook, the Department's small game biologist from the Farmville office, says it appears the 2006

**Top:** Using a crossbow for the first time during last year's archery season, Kevin Flippo dropped this massive 310-pound black bear with only one arrow at 25 yards. Flippo was hunting from a treestand in Lunenburg County. **Above:** Biologists look for declining quail populations to hold steady, while squirrels and rabbits remain abundant across the state.





©Lloyd B. Hill

Cook says squirrel populations are regulated mostly by availability of autumn hard mast, such as acorns and hickory nuts. To that end, mast failures tend to lead to population declines.

"Last year's mast survey suggests that mast production was down," he says. "Statewide, total acorn production was down 29 percent from 2004. It was the fifth worst acorn production season recorded in the eastern part of the state since the survey began in 1973, and the 14th worst in the western region. So, squirrel populations will likely be down a bit in many localities."

However, Cook adds, it is important to keep in mind that there will be plenty of squirrels for hunters. The annual Department survey indicates that Virginia's bushytail population has nearly tripled since the survey began in 1988.

"Therefore, if squirrels are down a bit this season, it doesn't mean they're scarce," he concludes.

Cook says gray squirrels are most abundant in the northern region, but a plentiful supply can be found in any mature hardwood stand in the state. Fox squirrels mainly inhabit the western part of the Old Dominion.

As most avid hunters know, bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*) have declined dramatically over the years in Virginia and much of the remainder of the South.

"The decline can be mostly attributed to habitat loss and degradation," Cook adds.

He says bobwhites are most abundant in Tidewater. There are also some localized areas in the east Piedmont and northern regions with relatively high quail populations.

"Based on the 2005 Quail Hunter Survey (2006 surveys were not complete at press time), it appears that quail populations have stabilized somewhat," Cook says. "The 2005 June Call Count and Rural Mail Carrier surveys indicated a decline from 2004. Even in 'stable' populations, numbers will fluctuate. Right now, it appears that quail in Virginia may be up for a few years and down for a few years."

The best opportunities are found on private farmlands in Tidewater and on 2- to 5-year-old clear-cuts (private lands and some public lands such as state forests) in the Tidewater, northern, east and west Piedmont regions.

winter carryover wasn't below normal. There were no periods of deep, prolonged snow cover.

"Forecasting the fall rabbit season depends on what the (previous) weather is like during spring and summer," he says. "The dry spring was a little disconcerting. But, it's important to remember that below normal rainfall doesn't necessarily mean reduced rabbit populations."

The biologist indicates that only when rainfall is low enough to affect cover and food resources are rabbit populations negatively affected. Cook recommends the southwest mountain region for the best cottontail hunting. They are also abundant across the rest of the state, but he says they are least abundant in the east Piedmont region.



©Debra Curtis



### Top-10 Counties for White-Tailed Deer Harvest (2005-2006)

Fauquier	7,340
Bedford	7,134
Loudoun	6,816
Southampton	5,628
Franklin	5,192
Albemarle	4,840
Shenandoah	4,608
Pittsylvania	4,277
Rockingham	4,085
Augusta	3,857

### Top-10 Counties for Black Bear Harvest (2005-2006)

Rockingham	153
Madison	95
Alleghany	88
Augusta	86
Rockbridge	84
Albemarle	66
Shenandoah	66
Page	60
Rappahannock	57
Bath	56

### Top-10 Counties for Wild Turkey Harvest (2005-2006)

Scott	144
Bedford	140
Botetourt	139
Cumberland	122
Amelia	116
Halifax	111
Pittsylvania	105
Shenandoah	105
Dinwiddie	103
Franklin	101

"As a quail hunter, I know firsthand that quail hunting is a difficult sport in Virginia," he says. "There are still pockets of good habitat and therefore quail, but you must actively seek them out."

Although ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) are Virginia's main upland game bird, the news is not so great regarding breeding. According to Gary Norman, preliminary drumming route data suggest a further decline in breeding grouse numbers in Virginia during the roadside census conducted in the spring of 2006.

"Although breeding population levels continue to decline, there is some good news for grouse hunters," Norman says. "Last year's acorn crops were improved in many areas in grouse range which generally translates into improved physical condition and higher reproductive success."

The results of the Department's research have shown that good mast conditions have the potential to improve populations quickly. Norman adds that spring weather can also influence reproductive success and early in the reproductive season, the weather was mild and warm.

"These conditions generally are favorable for nesting grouse," he says. "After hatching, normal temperatures and rainfall amounts generally result in higher grouse chick survival."

Norman advises hunters looking for additional information on the Department's research efforts to investigate grouse ecology to visit [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov).

"Information is available on the recently completed Appalachian Cooperative Grouse Research Project as well as other informative guidance on managing private lands for ruffed grouse," he says.

Hunters can find Virginia's ruffed grouse population mainly confined to the western half of the Commonwealth. Although Norman hesitates to pinpoint the state's best hunting locations, he says Highland and Clinch Mountain WMAs should be good destinations for grouse this year.

### Waterfowl: Resident and Migratory Birds

"If you asked any waterfowler what are the best conditions to hunt ducks, most would say the worse the weather, the better," says Tom Bidrowski, the Department's waterfowl project leader. "So as many waterfowlers know, the ability to predict the weather would allow us to forecast Virginia's waterfowl hunting season."

He says weather plays a major factor in waterfowl numbers and distribution. There are several factors one must consider to determine how many birds Virginia hunters will see in front of their blinds.

"One must take into account not only this year's spring and summer weather conditions, but also those of the previous winter," Bidrowski explains. "The condition birds are in when they leave their wintering grounds can greatly influence their success on the nesting grounds. Next, conditions have to be favorable to provide good nesting cover and adequate water levels. These favorable conditions then must be carried through the summer for the young to





grow, fledge and be in good condition for their southerly migration. Last, one must factor in the habitat conditions back on the wintering grounds that are needed to support birds here in Virginia."

A delay in the arrival of spring by a few weeks or a late season storm on the tundra may be the difference between a boom or bust nesting season, he says.

long season offers the opportunity for more days afield and a greater cumulative harvest over the course of the season. However, Bidrowski points out that a harvest restriction will remain for several species of concern including black ducks, canvasbacks, scaups and pintails.

"Probably, there has been no better time to be a goose hunter in Virginia," Bidrowski says. "In fact,

"However, finding a hunting spot in Virginia can be difficult," he says. "To find a good spot not only requires some pre-season scouting, but some reconnaissance throughout the season as waterfowl numbers fluctuate greatly during the season and so does competition for quality spots."

Bidrowski advises that a good opportunity for a quality hunt is to apply for one of the VDGIF-managed



Although, Virginia may be more noted as an important wintering area, it also produces some mallards, wood ducks, black ducks and resident Canada geese. The good news for hunters, Bidrowski says, is that Virginia's contribution to duck and goose populations will be higher this year thanks to a mild winter and favorable spring weather. This has resulted in greater residual cover for nesting and ample brood habitat. The result of this year's hatch will greatly influence those taking advantage of Virginia's early seasons.

In the last few years, waterfowlers have enjoyed liberal duck seasons that have resulted in high harvests in Virginia, he indicates. The

Canada geese are the most commonly harvested species in the Commonwealth. Migrant populations have made a tremendous rebound since the lows of the early 1990s, and the seasons have increased in conjunction with increasing goose numbers. Resident Canada geese have been an incredible resource for Virginia waterfowl hunters, particularly for those who hunt west of Interstate 95, where a long season with liberal limits offer sportsmen ample opportunity to bag a few geese."

Pre-season scouting is a must, contends Bidrowski. He also believes this is an excellent opportunity to brush up on waterfowl identification skills.

**Left to right: Making the best of a September early season goose hunting trip are James Thornhill, Scott Boze, Fitz Boze, Buck Elliott, Jim Elliott, Vins Thornhill and Cappy the Lab. Not pictured was the photographer, Wayne Fuller, who is also Cappy's proud owner.**

hunts. For those who are unlucky in the lottery, WMAs such as Princess Anne, Chickahominy and Game Farm Marsh in eastern Virginia offer excellent opportunities.

"Teal populations are fairly strong and the special September teal season offers hunters a chance to brush up on their wing shooting," he says. "The September goose season



runs congruent with the teal season and will provide hunters a chance to bag a teal or two along with a goose. The warm weather and plentiful birds are also an excellent opportunity to take a youth hunting."

With the biologists' expert accounts of what to expect this fall hunting season, now is the time to sight in rifles, pattern shotguns, ensure your hunting gear is in tiptop shape and get in the woods to enjoy one of the wonderful experiences that await in Virginia. □

*Marc N. McGlade is a writer and photographer from Midlothian. Marc is a regular contributor to Virginia Wildlife, Game & Fish, FLW Outdoors, North Carolina Sportsman, The Sportsman's Magazine and other national and regional publications.*

## More Information

◆ For questions concerning hunting regulations, bag limits or other hunting-related inquiries, contact VDGIF at (804) 367-1000, or go online at [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov). Hunters who purchase a license should receive a current copy of the *Hunting & Trapping in Virginia* pamphlet.

◆ All hunters 12 to 15 years of age (or those 16 and over who have never been issued a hunting license) must take a mandatory hunter education course.

◆ Hunting licenses and permits are valid from July 1 through June 30 with a couple of exceptions.

◆ VDGIF is interested in recruiting avid grouse hunters to help with an annual survey regarding hunting success. If interested, contact Gary Norman at (540) 248-9389 or e-mail at [gary.norman@dgif.virginia.gov](mailto:gary.norman@dgif.virginia.gov).

◆ To view the Virginia Black Bear Management Plan, visit [www.dgif.virginia.gov/hunting/va\\_game\\_wildlife/management\\_plans/bear/index.html](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/hunting/va_game_wildlife/management_plans/bear/index.html).

◆ Migratory waterfowl hunters are reminded that in addition to obtaining a Harvest Information Program (HIP) permit number and Federal Duck Stamp, waterfowl hunters in Virginia are required to purchase a Virginia Migratory Waterfowl Con-



**Top: Brandon Wilkins of Farnham is a great example of why it's important to take a kid hunting. With the help of his uncle, Jeff Newsome, 11-year-old Brandon managed to take his first buck, an impressive six-pointer, last December while hunting at Lottsburg Hunt Club. Above: It's imperative that hunters, young and old, take the time to understand their rifles and shotguns, and pattern them before venturing into the woods during hunting season.**

servation Stamp. The proceeds from the sale of the stamp will be used for habitat improvement grants to non-profit organizations and VDGIF's initiatives to protect, restore, enhance and develop waterfowl habitat.

◆ **Please report all banded birds.** This information is used to evaluate bird movements and survival. It is also helpful in developing appropriate hunting regulations and other strategies for managing migratory waterfowl. To report a banded bird, phone (800) 327-BAND.

◆ Hunters for the Hungry is an organization dedicated to feeding people in need in Virginia. For additional information on this worthy cause, visit [www.h4hungry.org](http://www.h4hungry.org), e-mail [hunt4hungry@cs.com](mailto:hunt4hungry@cs.com) or call (800) 352-4868.

◆ Telephone-checked deer as well as traditional check cards will be accepted to enter a deer head in the Eastern or Western Regional Big Game Contests, or the Virginia Outdoor Sportsman Show.

◆ The 2006 Virginia Big Game Contest; Eastern Regional will be held September 9-10, at the Southampton County Fairgrounds in Franklin and the State Championship and Western Regional will be September 23-24, at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds in Harrisonburg. For more information and directions go to [www.vpsa.org](http://www.vpsa.org) or [www.iwla-rh.org](http://www.iwla-rh.org).

◆ The Virginia Outdoor Sportsman Show, now in its 23rd year, will take place August 11-13, 2006, at the Showplace in Mechanicsville. This show is an excellent kickoff to Virginia's fall hunting season. For additional information, visit [www.sportsmanshow.com](http://www.sportsmanshow.com) or phone (804) 748-7529. □



# 2006-2007 Hunting Seasons Quick Reference

## Big Game

### Deer

#### Archery

- Statewide (Early) – October 7–November 17
- West (Late) – December 4–January 6
- Chesapeake, Suffolk (east) & Virginia Beach – December 1–January 6
- Floyd, Franklin, Henry, Patrick & Pittsylvania (west) – December 18–January 6
- Urban Archery – September 16–October 6
- January 8–March 31 (special restrictions apply)

#### Muzzleloader

- East (Early) – November 4–17
- West (Early) – November 11–17
- West & certain counties east (Late) – December 16–January 6
- Chesapeake & Virginia Beach (Late) – December 16–January 6

#### Firearms

- East – November 18–January 6
- West – November 18–December 2
- Chesapeake, Suffolk (east) & Virginia Beach – October 2–November 30
- Floyd, Franklin, Henry, Patrick & Pittsylvania (west) – November 18–December 16

### Turkey

#### Fall

Archery – October 7–November 11

#### Firearms

- Generally – October 28–November 10, November 23, and December 11–January 6.
- Prince George, Isle of Wight, Southampton, Surry, Sussex and Buchanan – October 28–November 10 and November 23
- Certain counties in Northern Neck, Middle and Lower Peninsula areas – October 28–November 10, November 23, and December 11–23

#### Spring Gobbler

- (Statewide) General – April 14–May 5 and May 7–19
- Youth Day (Statewide, age 15 and younger) – April 7

### Bear

#### Archery

- (Statewide) – October 14–November 11

#### Muzzleloading

- (Certain counties) – November 14–17

#### Firearms

- West (certain counties) – November 27–January 6
- Southwest (certain counties) – December 4–16
- Chesapeake, Suffolk, Virginia Beach – November 6–January 6

#### Hound Training

- Certain counties – August 12–September 30
- Certain counties – December 4–16 (closed Sunday)

## Small Game and Furbearers

### Bobcat

Archery: October 7–31

Firearms: November 1–February 28

### Coyote

Continuous open season

### Crow

August 19–March 17 (On Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays only)

### Fox

Firearms (certain counties)– November 1–February 28  
Dogs Only (except National Forest and certain public lands– Continuous open season

### Groundhog

Continuous open season

### Grouse

October 28–February 10 (west of I-95)

### Opossum

October 16–March 10

### Quail & Pheasant

November 11–January 31

### Rabbit

November 4–February 14

### Raccoon

Firearms – October 16–March 10

Continuous open season in all counties and portions of counties east of Rt. 29 and in the counties of Loudoun (east of Rt. 15) and Prince William (east of Rt. 15).

August 1–May 31 On **private lands** in all counties and portions of counties west of Route 29 and in the counties of Loudoun (west of Rt. 15) and Prince William (west of Rt. 15) **and on** Fairystone Farms, G. Richard Thompson, Rapidan and Turkeycock Wildlife Management Areas.

### Skunk

Continuous open season for striped skunks only

### Squirrel

Firearms – September 2– January 31  
(fox squirrels certain counties)  
June 2-23, 2007 (certain WMA's)  
(fox squirrels certain WMA's)

## Trapping

### Beaver, Mink, Muskrat, Otter, Weasel

December 1–February 28

### Bobcat, Fox, Opossum, Raccoon

November 15–February 28

### Coyote, Nutria, Skunk (striped only)

Continuous open season

### Rabbit

October 15–January 31



## Youth Hunts and New Public Hunting Areas

◆ **Hog Island–Youth Waterfowl Day.** This is an opportunity for 30 youths to hunt waterfowl on the Hog Island WMA in Surry County. The Department, in cooperation with Ducks Unlimited, will host a youth waterfowl-hunting day in October (visit [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov) for exact date). Only youth may hunt and carry a firearm. All youth hunters must register for this event. A licensed adult must accompany youth hunters.

◆ **Featherfin WMA**—Virginia's newest addition. Featherfin WMA covers nearly 2,800 acres in Prince Edward, Appomattox and Buckingham counties. Numerous forested ridges and small drainages merge with the Appomattox River along Featherfin's 10 miles of river frontage. Deer, turkey and squirrel hunting can be very productive. In recent years, black bears have become more common in the area, and occasional sightings by hunters have been reported. Old fields left fallow from previous farming activities offer some limited habitat for rabbits and quail. The Appomattox River provides opportunities for jump-shooting wood ducks during the early fall, and woodcock are common within many wetland areas along the river and its tributaries.

◆ **VDGIF**, in conjunction with the City of Chesapeake and The Nature Conservancy, acquired a 3800-acre tract of land locally known as the Cavalier property. The Department purchased the land from International Paper for approximately \$3.9 million with money from the Game Protection Fund. The City of Chesapeake and The Nature Conservancy played key roles in the purchase agreement. Acquisition of the property conserves important habitat for a variety of resident wildlife as well as numerous migratory birds, including waterfowl. The property provides coastal, forested habitats for a wide range of wildlife, including black bear, neotropical migratory songbirds, canebrake rattlesnakes, white-tailed deer and Eastern wild turkeys.



Lee Walker

The tract, located approximately 2.5 miles east of the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, was once part of the Great Dismal Swamp, but was ditched and drained more than 200 years ago. In addition to anticipated wildlife watching, the site, which traditionally has been hunted by the Cavalier Hunt Club, will be open for public hunting. Hunters seeking deer, bear, turkey and small game will likely be successful here. □

**Above:** Looking for a place to take a youngster hunting? How about a waterfowl hunt at Hog Island, one of the Department's many organized youth hunting programs. **Below:** While hunting with their dads, 6-year-old Clay Naff and 9-year-old Kendall Evans show outdoor adventures can start with something as simple as stalking squirrels or as challenging as a whitetail hunt.



©Scott Naff





[www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov)

## Click on Find Game

**F**ind Game is an interactive Web-based map viewer designed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) to provide information about hunting quality, land location and access.

Find Game allows you to map hunting areas by location and/or by game species. The following public hunting lands are included:

- VDGIF Wildlife Management Areas
- State Parks
- State and National Forests
- Military Installations
- National Wildlife Refuges
- and other special hunting opportunities

Within Virginia there are 3.5 million acres of public hunting land. Find Game lists: hunting quality by species, land manager contact information, site description, facilities available, access information, and associated Web links for each of the 115 properties.

While Find Game provides a wealth of information, VDGIF strongly recommends that hunters contact local land managers before traveling to a hunting destination. Hunting access and regulations change over time, so check Find Game often!

For more information e-mail:

[Findgame@dgif.virginia.gov](mailto:Findgame@dgif.virginia.gov)

**Point. Click. Map.**  
**Find Virginia's public hunting lands!**



### Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

This project is supported by the 2005 Hunting Heritage Partnership,  
A grant program of the National Shooting Sports Foundation, Inc.





# How would you like to search?

[Species](#) | [Location](#) | [Species & Location](#) | [Property](#) | [Show Statewide Map](#)

To begin your search, select one of the tabs above.

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

[DGIF Main](#) | [DGIF Hunting Main](#) | [Regulations](#) | [Managed Hunts](#) | [Buy Your License](#)

STATE MAP | ZOOM IN | ZOOM OUT | LAST ZOOM | RECENTER | INFORMATION | PRINT MAP | HELP

**Find Game** | [Return to Find Game Home](#)

[Map Features](#) | [Legend](#) | [Search](#) | [Info](#)

**Information for the Selected Property**  
**Name:** [Amelia WMA](#)  
**Owner:** DGIF  
**Contact:** phone: VA DGIF 434-525-7522  
**Notes:** Expect heavy hunting pressure during dove, deer, and turkey seasons; small game hunting (quail/rabbit/woodcock) restricted via DGIF quota hunt  
**Facilities:** dove field, primitive camping, field trial, hiking, birding and wildlife trail, boat ramp, shooting range, trapping, handicapped accessible - contact manager  
**Links:**  
[WMA Home Page](#)  
**Species hunting quality:**

Bear	Species not common
Deer	Average
Dove	Good
Grouse	Species not common
Quail	Poor
Rabbit	Poor
Raccoon	Average
Squirrel	Good
Turkey	Good
Waterfowl	Average

## Search Options

**Y**ou can search by game species, location, both location and game species, specific property, or get a statewide view. A species search displays public hunting lands according to the hunting suitability for bear, deer, turkey, grouse, quail, rabbit, raccoon, dove, squirrel or waterfowl. This also provides a list of properties rated as "average" to "excellent." The location-based searches allow you to enter a county or zipcode and search for lands within a specified number of miles (for example, within 50 miles of Loudoun County). A property search zooms you to one of the approximately 115 properties available in Find Game. The statewide map shows you a map with all hunter-accessible public lands in the Commonwealth.

**Point. Click. Map.**  
**Find Virginia's public hunting lands!**

[www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov)



**click on Find Game**

**Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries**



# Find Game

by Tee Clarkson

**T**here is one undeniable certainty in the world today. It isn't getting any bigger. And for those of us who love to hunt and fish, this fact has an impact far greater than long lines at the toll booth and hard times finding spots to park at the mall. For many of us, the ponds we fished as kids have been paved. The cutovers we crossed in our youth have become condos. We have lost our wild places, which has forced us to find new locations to spend our time outdoors. Fortunately, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) has created a new program that makes it easier to find these places.

With literally millions of public acres in the state of Virginia, the thought of discovering that perfect tree to hang a deer stand or the right patch of wild berries to flush a grouse may seem daunting. The new *Find Game* program on the VDGIF's Web site leaves the first steps to discovering these locations right in the comfort of your own home.

The *Find Game* program, which can be accessed from the home page of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries ([www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov)) has linked information and maps from over 130 locations and three and a half million public acres open for hunting. The program contains maps of all VDGIF Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), State Parks, State Forests, military installation, National Forests, U.S. Corps of Army Engineers lands and National Wildlife Refuges that allow hunting in the state of Virginia.

For Dave Morton, project manager for *Find Game* and Geographic Information Systems Coordinator for the VDGIF, the program is something



he has been working towards since he started with the Game Department four and a half years ago. "We recognized there was a big need for maps for sportsmen," he says, "and we wanted to provide something dynamic, that would incorporate our ever-changing public properties."

The program provides searches by species, location, specific property, and also contains a statewide map. By clicking in closer you can access topographical maps to the entire state. The program is not public-land specific. Topographical maps of both public and private lands are available. A hunter can even print the topographical maps showing the properties leased by their hunt club.

With only five or six other states in the country providing similar programs, it is safe to say that Virginia is on the cutting edge of technology when it comes to providing web access and information to its citizens through *Find Game*. The project, which was funded primarily by a Hunting Heritage Partnership grant from the National Shooting Sports Foundation, was aided greatly by Virginia Tech's Conservation Management Institute (CMI). The CMI provided most of the technical support needed to get the program working.

David Coffman, Sportsman's Education Coordinator for the Wildlife Division of the VDGIF and member of the *Find Game* development group, points out that the goal of the program is multi-faceted. First, they

Can't find a place to go hunting? Now it's as easy as point, click and map!

wanted something that would allow for "periodic updates that are easy and inexpensive" while also "promoting the great public hunting opportunities in Virginia for out-of-state hunters." Traveling the Southeast promoting the program, David has encountered nothing but positive feedback. "People are more interested in coming to the state and hunting when they can figure out where to go before they get here," Coffman says. More importantly, David adds, "There are a lot of people living in Virginia that have only been here a few months or a few years." The program provides them with a comprehensive look at public hunting opportunities across the state.

With the goal of creating a tool that is both helpful and simple for anyone who might wish to use it, those in charge of developing *Find Game* created what they called a key-end-users group. This group, consisting of fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, game wardens, and avid hunters both young and old, all provided input as to what they would like to see in the new program. The end result culminated in a tool that is easy to access and easy to operate.

The program launched in November 2005, after the hunting season was well underway and has already accumulated 7500 users from 47 states and territories. With another hunting season right around the corner, these numbers are sure to rise quickly in the upcoming months. So before you go to that same old spot this year, check out *Find Game*. Your new favorite hunting area may be only a click of the mouse away. □

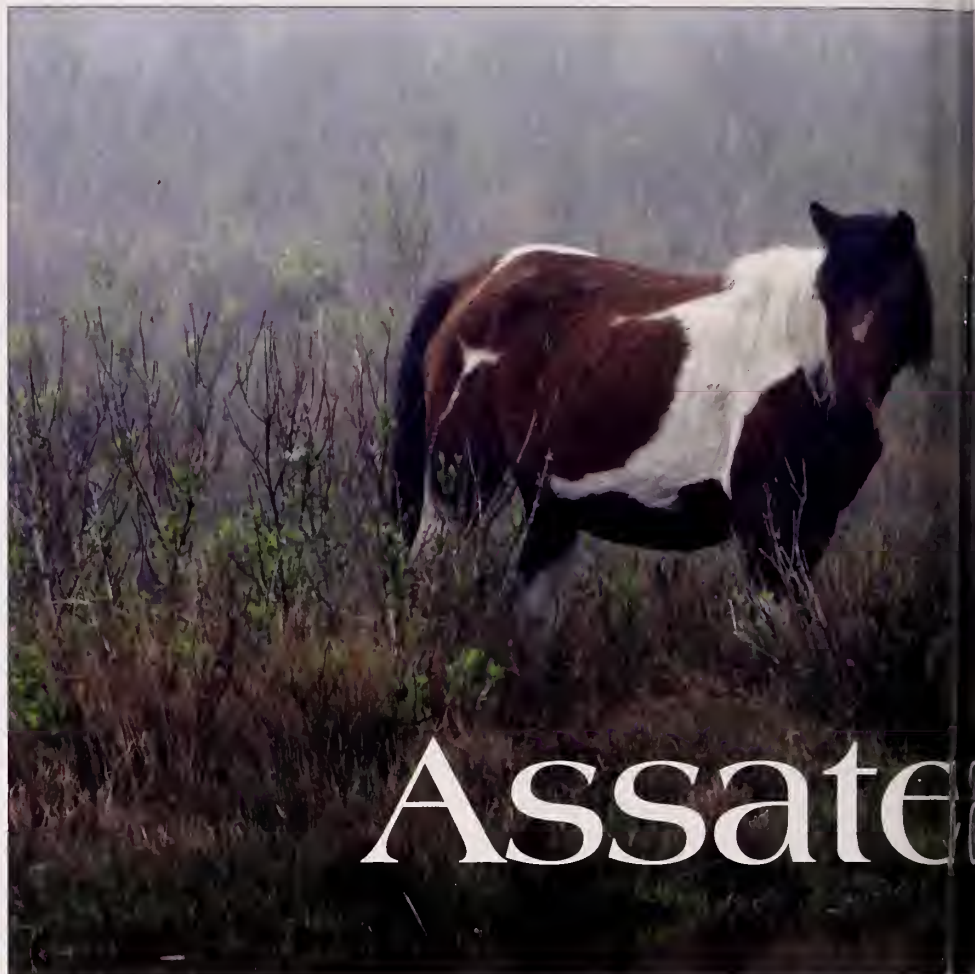
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*Tee Clarkson is an English teacher and in his spare time runs Virginia Fishing Adventures, a fishing camp for kids. For more information you can contact Tee at: [tsclarkson@virginiafishingadventures.com](mailto:tsclarkson@virginiafishingadventures.com).*





Sika Deer (*Cervus nippon*)



story and photos by Gregory J. Pels

**D**awn breaks, and another new day begins on Assateague. Through the early morning mist, egrets wade in the shallow lagoon and ponies graze on fresh spring grass. A sika deer wanders out from the forest and a big Delmarva fox squirrel rests high in a tree while a quail forages for spring seeds below.







Delmarva Peninsula Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus niger cinereus*)

# ague Reflections

*A Moment in Time on  
Assateague Island*

Wild Ponies of Assateague Island



Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)



Chincoteague Island fishing fleet

Assateague Island, the northernmost barrier island on Virginia's Eastern Shore, and the town of Chincoteague, are best known for their pony round-up festival that is held in late July. I prefer to visit the island when there are fewer people and I can enjoy the peace and serenity of this beautiful place. A tranquil early morning walk along the many trails allows avid bird watchers and photographers an excellent opportunity to experience nature and view concentrations of wildlife that are rarely seen in other places.





Common Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*)



Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)



Eastern Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta picta*)

**I**t is now mid morning and a muskrat enjoys an early meal while tree swallows investigate a potential nesting site. A family of Canada geese waddles along the roadside not far from the safety of the water. Egrets and herons feed on crabs and fish and often perch in trees to scan the surrounding waters.

About a four-hour drive from Richmond, I come to Assateague about four times a year. I am attracted to the natural beauty, the quiet and the abundance of birds and other animals that I find here. And, unlike many coastal areas, Assateague remains relatively wild and untouched.

Midday has arrived and turtles enjoy the warmth of the afternoon sun, while an otter eyes me with caution as he swims on by. Time goes by quickly at Assateague. As early evening approaches, a glossy ibis hunts frogs in the marsh and a blue heron displays his most recent catch. A snapping turtle rests in the grass while egrets and herons continue their endless search for food.







Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*)



Sunset at Assateague NWR

During the evening, the loop around the lagoon is open to vehicles. A slow, leisurely drive allows me to see a lot of wildlife in a short time, not to mention a rest for my weary legs after a full day of walking. I will often drive around the loop several times, each time seeing different birds and other animals, frequently stopping to take another photo. It is so peaceful here.

Another day draws to an end. The sun begins to set. I have stopped near the lagoon to watch the sun set and to photograph that special moment. It has been a good day...I hate to see it end. As the sun sets, I delight in the evening colors and the cool stillness. From the woods, a white tail deer darts out and bolts across the marsh...then stops in the setting sun and looks directly at me as if to say "here I am, take my picture."

What a wonderful place. □

*For 30 years Gregory Pels has been exploring Virginia, capturing through the lens of his camera moments in time that reflect the incredible diversity of the states wildlife and special places.*



Great Egret (*Ardea alba*)



# Wild Game Gourmet

*University professor and avid deer hunter, Hans Rott, shares some "Old World" recipes that will add a twist to your next wild game dinner.*



©Hans Rott



©Hans Rott

by Joan Cone

**H**ere, in the United States, game belongs to the state. Unless raised on a licensed game farm, it cannot be legally sold to individuals or restaurants. Whatever you bring home from forest, field or water is yours. In Europe, game is the personal property of the landowner. He can invite friends to a pheasant shoot on his acreage, keep every bird, or send it to market, retaining the income to use at his pleasure. Because of the way it is harvested and sold, only the wealthy can afford a game meal at a fine restaurant. Prepared by high-priced chefs according to their tastes, European game cooking often involves much bacon and heavy cream plus far greater employment of internal organs such as deer kid-

**Above: One of the best Christmas gifts that a hunter can give is serving a meal of wild turkey or venison. Upper right: Hans Rott believes that learning how to properly care and prepare your game after the hunt will make all the difference in taste and texture.**

neys and livers. With rare exceptions, little regard is given to fat and calories.

Architecture Professor Hans Rott, of Virginia Tech, was raised as a boy in Austria. His recipes stem from the years he spent feeding a family on game. He used many recipes for tongues, livers, hearts and other organs which are often discarded here in America. When he shoots a deer, he hangs it outside, unskinned, until it is threatened by internal mold. This is the European system for aging game. In England, I personally know

that pheasant are hung by the neck, uncleaned, until the body drops off, and woodcock are served with the intestines curled above the cooked bird. Most of us prefer our game be fresh rather than aged by foreign methods.

Juniper berries are available at Krogers, other supermarkets and at health food stores. Professor Rott explains that whether you use a few less juniper berries will not make much difference. He is a firm believer in the importance of special sauces for specific game dishes, and these are explained in the following recipes.

Even if you, or someone in your family, must watch calories, you may want to try some of Dr. Rott's methods. They are delicious. The carp recipe is interesting, because it deals with an underutilized fish, which is fun to catch yet tastes like an old sock when boiled or fried. Carp roe, comparable to shad roe, is first rate. You probably know that carp is not a native American fish. Several varieties were imported as a food source long before the advent of recreational angling. They could be raised at no cost in millponds and then netted and sold by the miller for extra income.

Professor Rott cooks his game as follows: venison, duck, dove and grouse rare; groundhog, goose, rabbit and squirrel well to very well done; wild turkey from very well to medium rare, depending on the age and sex of the bird.



## Roast Loin

The loin can be used in various ways. For this recipe we will use the separated backstrap. Depending on how many servings you desire, I suggest starting with the hind part of the strap, because it has a tendency to become slightly tougher the more an animal moves toward the neck. Clean the strap of all tendons and membranes and let sit at room temperature for a few hours.

### Roasting the Loin

Preheat oven to 425° F. Place equal amounts of butter and olive oil in a roasting pan and seal the ends of the loin. Place pan on middle rack in the oven and roast for 16 to 18 minutes. Turn once. Remove the loin to a cutting board.

One day ahead, prepare the following sauce base:

#### Woodland Sauce

3 strips of bacon, minced  
2 small yellow onions, sliced  
1 carrot, diced small  
8 red peppercorns  
2 cloves  
8 juniper berries  
10 black peppercorns, crushed  
1 pinch thyme  
2 cups beef stock  
3 sprigs parsley  
1 teaspoon dried rosemary  
½ cup red vermouth

Arrowroot for thickening. (Follow instructions on container)

In a saucepan, render the bacon and add the vegetables and spices except the rosemary and vermouth. Brown vegetables and spices and add one cup beef stock and reduce to ¼ volume. Add remaining beef stock and reduce to ½ volume. Let sit for at least 12 hours in the refrigerator.

Slice the loin and recover all the juices. Place the meat, covered, in a warm oven. Add the juices to the sauce base along with the rosemary and vermouth. Simmer lightly for 5 minutes. Thicken with arrowroot, strain and serve.

## Sirloin Roast in Cabernet

When you are deboning a hind leg of venison, you will find one large rounded muscle which separates from the others quite easily. Pull

away this muscle. Peel the thin membrane and trim all tendon and connective tissue from the roast. Set aside, at room temperature, to warm. One day ahead of final assembly, prepare a basic brown stock.

¼ pound fatback or side meat, diced  
1 large yellow onion, diced  
1 carrot, diced  
1 stalk celery, diced  
1 small turnip, diced  
1 tomato, seeds removed  
1 can beef stock or equivalent of venison stock  
2 sprigs parsley  
1 teaspoon thyme  
8 black peppercorns  
4 tablespoons salted butter  
4 tablespoons olive oil  
1 bottle cabernet sauvignon  
Salt and pepper to taste

In a deep saucepan render the fatback. Then place the diced vegetables into the pan and brown. Add the beef or venison stock and reduce by about one third. Make a brown roux and stir into the boiling mixture. Add parsley and spices and simmer, covered, for about 20 minutes. Turn off and let sit for at least 12 hours in the refrigerator.

Preheat oven to 425° F. Place roast into a frying pan with a mixture of 4 tablespoons butter and 4 tablespoons of olive oil. Place in oven and roast for 9 minutes on each side. This should produce a rare center from a large leg. While cooking the roast, finish

the sauce. Strain the brown sauce, without too much rubbing, into a saucepan. Bring to simmer and add 1 cup of cabernet. Bring to a boil and flame or steam away the alcohol. Finish with salt and pepper to taste. Slice the roast recovering all juices.

Deglaze the pan with these juices and ¼ cup cabernet. Add this to the sauce and serve.

## Deer Schnitzel

A deer has a lot of thin flat muscles along the rib cage and belly. I like to recover as much of that as is practical and peel it apart, removing the interstitial layers of fat. This results in thin, lean muscle which then can be cut into schnitzel-sized flats, 4 x 5-inches. On older animals, I pound those pieces with the back of a chef's knife on both sides to break the fiber.

Salt the meat on both sides. Take three separate plates: in one put flour; in another two eggs lightly beaten with one tablespoon milk, lightly salted; in the third, plain bread crumbs. Dip the meat into the flour, patting the flour to thoroughly cover. Then dip the meat on both sides into the egg mixture. Next dip meat into bread crumbs, again patting the crumbs firmly and covering both sides. In a medium hot pan with enough peanut oil to cover half of the schnitzel, slowly fry both sides. Turn once when the bottom side is golden brown.



Ask any deer hunter what they consider to be the best cut of venison and you will most likely hear—the loin. Rott, however, would like to encourage hunters to make classic culinary dishes from other parts of the deer, such as kidneys, tongues and hearts.



## Kidneys in Rum Sauce

I freeze the kidneys, if possible, in their fat casings. This keeps them from getting freezer burn and preserves the kidney fat which is a wonderful shortening when rendered. It is ideal for soups and sauces where all the fat must be separated before serving. It consolidates perfectly and can be removed without any effort. For this recipe, remove the fat, however, and peel the membranes off the kidneys.

6 kidneys  
Salt  
4 large shallots, minced  
10 juniper berries, crushed  
Pinch of rosemary



Proper cleaning and storage help to enhance the taste of dishes made from many wild game animal parts, such as the kidneys.

Pinch of thyme  
Olive oil  
¼ cup dark rum

Slice the kidneys into ¼-inch slices, salt lightly and set aside. Do not discard the juices—they go into the skillet with the kidneys. Place all ingredients, except the rum, into a skillet with enough olive oil to cover the bottom. Sauté over medium heat until kidneys are done, about 5 minutes. Add the rum and flame out. Cook over high heat to reduce liquids until all is slightly thickened. Serve hot.

## Roast Squirrel

4 squirrels, cut into 6 pieces  
Salt  
Flour  
Canola oil  
3 large carrots, diced  
1 large yellow onion, diced  
1 can vegetable broth  
1 can chicken broth  
2 cloves garlic  
6 juniper berries  
6 black peppercorns  
2 sprigs thyme  
2 tablespoons dark rum  
2 tablespoons white apple vinegar  
1 large sprig fresh rosemary

After salting, dredge squirrel in flour. Place squirrel in a large braising pan (cast iron with lid is ideal) and

base. Add salt and vinegar; blend again. If it is too thick, you can add a little of the stock. If too thin, thicken with arrowroot. In a small saucepan (high sides preferable) combine ⅓ cup canola oil and rosemary sprig. Heat, slowly, until needles change color, but do not let brown. Take off heat and let stand until you are done with the sauce preparation and ready to serve.

Just before serving, spoon a little of the oil over the squirrel or on the plates. Serve with wide pasta, potato or bread dumplings.

## Rabbit Stew

This recipe can be increased proportionally for more rabbits. Cut back on carrot, parsnip and turnip by



lightly brown in canola oil. Set aside. Add vegetables and vegetable and chicken broth to the braising pan. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer for about 1 hour. Preheat oven to 325° F. Add squirrel to pan with vegetable mixture and place in oven for 2½ hours. Remove from oven and set squirrel aside, keeping it warm. In a blender or processor, place vegetables, 1 cup remaining liquid, garlic, juniper berries, peppercorns, thyme (leaves only) and rum; liquefy. This should make a thick, creamy sauce

One of Rott's favorite dishes and a European delicacy, is venison kidneys in rum sauce. This is a relatively simple recipe that will awaken your senses and surprise you with its sweet taste.

half for each added rabbit. Domestic rabbits also can be used, but you should allow for the increase in size when choosing ingredients. Slice half of fatback for rendering. Cut the other half into cubes, approximately ¾ to ½-inch in side length. Boil these cubes in a small pot of water for five



minutes. Dry on paper towels and set aside for browning. These are called "lardons." I use large bottles of Livingston or Gallo burgundy, as this wine has the robust acidity needed for this recipe.

1 cottontail rabbit  
 ½ pound fatback  
 1 large onion, sliced  
 1 old carrot, sliced  
 1 large parsnip, sliced  
 1 small turnip, sliced  
 1 sprig parsley  
 1 clove garlic, sliced  
 2 whole cloves  
 1½ liter red wine  
 4 large shallots  
 8 juniper berries  
 Salt  
 ¼ cup heavy cream

Add the head, pelvis, liver and any other trimmings and brown on all sides. Remove these until the vegetables are lightly browned. Add trimmings to vegetables along with red wine and water to cover pieces. Simmer, covered, for one hour. In a large skillet brown the lardons on all sides, remove and add the remaining rabbit pieces and brown thoroughly. After browning remove. Add shallots and juniper berries and deglaze the pan twice with red wine. Remove from heat and add lardons. Returning to the stock, add rabbit pieces and gently boil for 30 to 45 minutes. Add wine as needed to keep the meat covered. Let the liquid reduce to minimum coverage towards the end of the cooking time. Remove from heat,

would like a gamier taste, rub the liver all the way through the sieve and avoid too much of the sweet vegetables—carrot, turnip and parsnip. Also, use dark rye bread for thickening instead of flour ball\*. Add rabbit and heavy cream, reheat, uncovered, and use butter and flour ball to thicken. Serve over potato or bread dumplings or your favorite pasta. If you wish to eat this dish immediately, it's delicious, but keep a little in a sealed container and try it after a few days and see the difference.

\* For a flour ball, mix butter and flour until they form a dry ball which you can knead in your hand. While the sauce simmers, crumble the ball slowly into the sauce, whisking constantly, until the sauce is thickened.



### Traditional Viennese Christmas Carp

1 carp, about 2½ pounds  
 Flour  
 2 eggs  
 Salt  
 Spritz of milk  
 Unseasoned bread crumbs  
 Crushed pepper, optional  
 1 stick lightly salted butter

Cut the carp and keep the roe in a bowl—it is delicious sautéed! Filet the carp and cut into six pieces. Take three plates: put a handful of flour in one; break eggs into the next and add a little salt and milk, whipping with a fork until well-blended; in the third place a generous amount of bread crumbs, crushed pepper if desired. Dip the salted fish pieces into the flour, patting it onto the fish. Then dip thoroughly into the egg mix and then immediately into the bread crumbs, making sure the fish is covered all around, and the crumbs well patted on. Melt butter over low heat in a flat skillet. Gently place fillets in skillet and fry until golden brown. Turn and brown on opposite side.

Small roasted potatoes, rolled in chopped parsley, make a wonderful accompaniment. □

*Joan Cone has been serving up mouth watering recipes to the readers of Virginia Wildlife magazine for over 20 years.*

Skin and cut up a well-aged rabbit. You can use a freshly-killed animal, but four to five days seasoning in the pelt in the refrigerator will increase tenderness and improve flavor. Cut rabbit into small pieces. For the sauce base, use the neck, head, saddle between the shoulder and pelvis. The legs and six saddle pieces are preferred for serving.

In a large, heavy braising pan render the sliced fat until the tissue is lightly browned.

**If you don't want to "bite off more than you can chew" start with recipes made with squirrels or rabbits. They're abundant and are the perfect complement when served with Virginia homegrown vegetables.**

season with salt and add contents and all juices from the skillet. Cover and place in refrigerator for two or three days. Remove rabbit serving pieces and the prettiest lardons. Strain the rest of the contents through a fine sieve, rubbing slightly. If you





# Solo Sika

*Looking for big surprises in small packages? Then how about planning a big game hunt for the Shore's "little elk."*

photos and story by David Judd

**M**y son's wrestling coach is always saying, "if it was easy, everyone would be doing it." I can't stop saying this to myself over and over again as I trek across the marsh in whiteout conditions. When I signed in at the ranger station, he looked at me like I was nuts.

Other than some duck hunters, I would have the island to myself. My fingers feel like wood as I fool with the tire valves for driving over the sand. Driving down the beach, I feel like I am in North Dakota after they close the interstate. With the help of GPS, I find my parking spot. About 40 yards from my truck I need to get my compass out to keep my line. I seriously need ski goggles to be able to see 10 feet in front of me. Having hunted this spot for the last 20 years certainly helps with finding your way in conditions like this. Spotting a familiar pine tree at the edge of a meadow and crossing a creek at the edge of the thicket are all the clues necessary to get to my favorite spot. It has been a very productive one for me. With just a little luck and if the weather report is right, this could be perfect conditions for late season bowhunting sika on Assateague Island. Eighteen degrees, a howling northwest wind and snow squalls ending about mid-morning..."perfect".



Assateague Island National Seashore is a barrier island on the Atlantic just south of Ocean City, Maryland. It is one unit of the National Park System. Requirements for hunting at Assateague include a valid Maryland hunting license and signing in and out at the ranger station prior to entering and leaving the hunting area. If you plan on driving on the beach to access areas far south, an off road vehicle permit is also required.

Sika hunting is also permitted at Chincoteague National Wildlife

Refuge in Virginia. Requirements at Chincoteague include a valid state/county license, big game license, archery license and refuge permit. Hunters must also attend a hunt orientation at the refuge. Archery hunting at Assateague runs from mid September to the end of January. Hunt dates for Chincoteague NWR, while considerably fewer, are in October, which is considered the prime time for sika hunting. More details about hunting these areas are available on each organization's Web sites.

Although the scenery here is beautiful, hunting Assateague is no day at the beach. You have an ATV with a bucket full of baiting corn; don't even think about bringing it here. Screw in tree-steps: those will cost you a \$50 fine per step. Leave your treestand up for the next hunt, no can do. Just walking around in the marsh can be quite a trick. If you have ever stopped for directions and

on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and the Chincoteague area of Virginia. Mid-October is prime time for the sika rut. Like whitetails, if the cows are not bred, they will come into estrous again about a month later and are quite active well past Christmas. It is not unusual to see rutting activity well into January.

Just like elk, sika are quite vocal. If you have ever heard a sika stag bugle just before dark when you are way back in the marsh, you will never forget it. It will make the hair on the back of your neck stand up. Up until very recently, sika calls were very hard to find. Today, I am armed with the first commercially available sika call.

It is the product of the resident Eastern Shore sika expert: Doug Wigfield. Doug is a biologist with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Wildlife and Heritage Service. He is lifelong sika hunter and at



**Assateague Island National Seashore is located just off the coast of Virginia and Maryland. This 37-mile long barrier island is home to a variety of unique wildlife species, which include the sika deer. Though sika look like small white-tailed deer they are more closely related to elk.**

someone has told you "you can't get there from here," they've probably been to the Assateague backcountry. The bayberry thickets at times are impenetrable and can grab you up like the apple trees in the Wizard of Oz.

Complete with everything including the bugle, sika resemble miniature elk. They inhabit the marshy areas of Wicomico, Somerset, Dorchester and Worchester counties

one point had the Maryland record for bowkilled sika. It is hard to find anyone who knows more about sika hunting and calling than Doug. Like any other call, it takes some practice to perfect your technique. My first efforts sound like a second grader at his first trumpet lessons. At this point, it is probably a good idea to work on it at home until I perfect my bugle and cow call.



At 18 degrees, it's only a matter of time before my toes will be Popsicles. Luckily, I have some toe-warmers in my pack. In my rush to get hunting, I didn't get them into my boots where they belong. You would think that if I could sit patiently for three and a half hours, the three or four minutes it would take to get them into my boots wouldn't ruin a hunt. WRONG! Just about the time I have my boot off here comes a nice stag well within bow range. If it were easy everyone would be doing it.

There are a couple of things that make bowhunting at Assateague a memorable experience. Hearing the sound of the surf breaking while you are hunting is probably one of the most soothing sounds I can think of. Combined with the sound of the wind finding it's way through the pines, it is incredibly peaceful. On the other hand, having a wild pony come crashing through your hunting area can literally make you jump out of your skin.

One of the first things you will learn about Assateague is that you **DON'T FEED THE PONIES**. The island is inhabited by wild ponies that are possibly descendants from shipwrecks. They are also the island's main tourist attraction. They roam the island freely and are usually the reason for summer traffic jams. It seems to be an irresistible urge to stop and feed the ponies. The rangers have the difficult task of monitoring the handouts while being accommodating to the island's tourists.

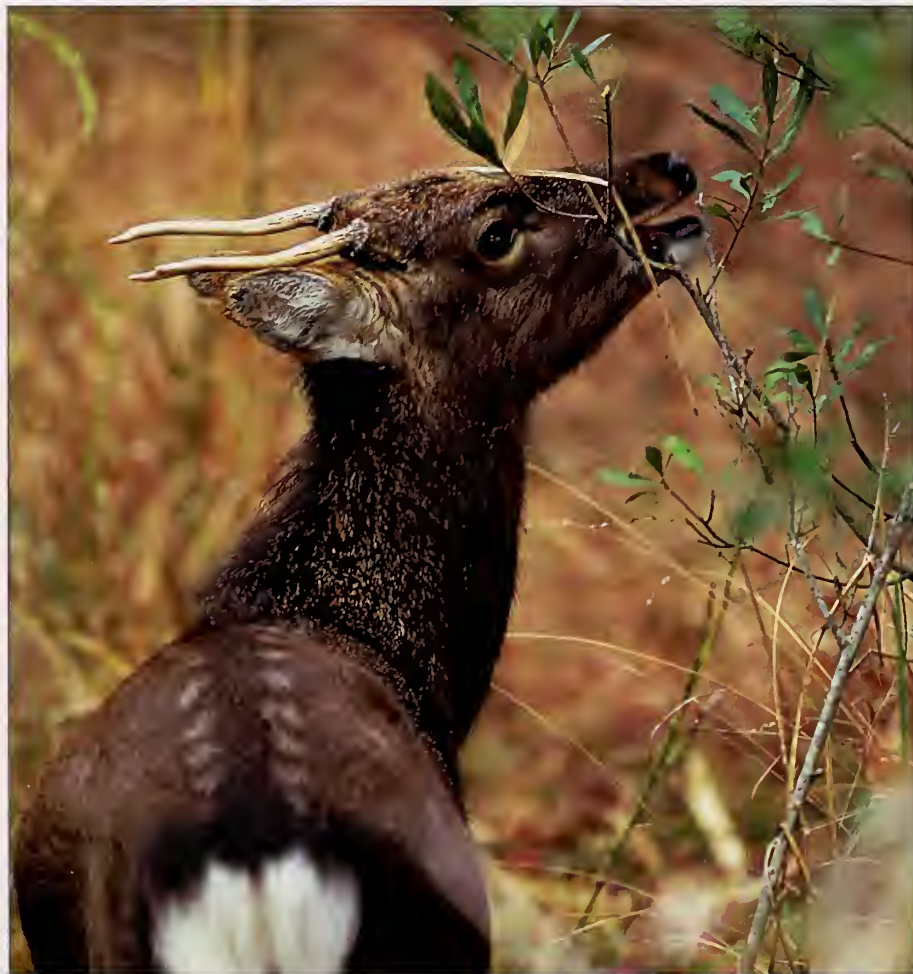
The fact that there is such an effort involved in bowhunting at Assateague seems to discourage a lot of people. Despite the fact that this is public land, I have rarely seen another bowhunter. In late season, you are lucky to see any at all. After checking in at the ranger station, driving up to seven or eight miles down the beach and walking up to a mile or so through the marsh and setting up a treestand or ground blind, it isn't hard to see why.

Like just about everything else in life, there is more than one way to hunt sika. One way is to hunt passively from either a treestand or a ground blind. The best thing to do is try to set up near a thicket or bedding area. In the marsh it is fairly easy to distinguish these with well-worn paths into the thickets. Applying whitetail tactics to sika can work. The only problem is finding a tree big enough to put a stand in. This is not the easiest scenario to find. If you are lucky enough to find a tree near a bedding area big enough for a tree stand, you are in business. But plan on keeping your head on a swivel because the combination of the sandy soil and pine needles on the forest floor means just about anything, including ponies, can move about without making a sound.

If there is ever a case for using a safety belt, this is it. Imagine trying to explain your position to a ranger or a friend. Even if you have a cell phone, coverage here is average at best. Given the fact that the area is as flat as a pancake and a lot of areas look alike, GPS can be very helpful. Not only does it help tremendously for scouting and reaching areas in the dark, it could give your position if you are hurt or unable to make it out on your own.

Setting up a ground blind on the edge of small meadow surrounded by bayberry is another good hunting method. Bayberry is all over the island and the sika love it. Another advantage to this method is that it keeps the bulk down. Without a tree stand or steps, the weight is considerably less. Being able to set up virtually anywhere gives you a lot more possibilities than looking around for a tree stand site.

**Compared to whitetail deer, sika are medium sized with a chestnut brown to reddish-olive coat, with numerous white spots occurring in 7 to 8 rows on the upper sides. A white rump patch ringed with a dark stripe is present and the chin, throat and belly are cream to light gray. Both sexes have a dark neck mane in the winter and males (stags) have narrow antlers that stand erect with 2 to 5 points per antler.**







The other way is to hunt aggressively. This is Doug's favorite method. Calling and stalking can be very effective. Sitting on top of a sand dune gives you a great vantage point while bugling or trying a cow call. The island has a lot of meadows that border thickets. These are perfect places to call and glass at early morning and late afternoon while working on your calling techniques.

One of Doug's other secrets is to walk in water on the edge of a bedding area. Combining this with calling led to his state record a few years ago. Remember that you are hunting an animal that spends most of its life not being able to see 10 yards through the marsh.

After blowing a perfect situation earlier in the morning, it is time to head back to my truck for lunch. Hopefully the wind hasn't blown it into the Atlantic or buried it in a sand dune. Coming out in daylight is a picnic compared to the mountaineering expedition from earlier this morning. Going blind in whiteout conditions and bucking a howling 30-knot headwind on the open meadow was quite an experience. Besides missing my opportunity at the stag, it was a very productive morning. I spotted eight sika. The cold air seems to really get them moving.

**Sika deer are primarily nocturnal and prefer to feed in remote marshy areas. The author (above) recommends hunting them during the rut, which occurs in October. Males become very vocal making a bugling sound, similar to elk, while in search of a female (hinds) to breed with.**

Setting up for the afternoon hunt, the weather conditions have gotten even better. The snow has tapered off and the wind has backed off a bit. The wind direction is still perfect with a steady breeze coming directly from the bedding area. Armed with fresh toe-warmers and a stomach full of motivation—also known as coffee, there should be no screw-ups this afternoon.

After about two hours of peace, things start to get busy. A string of three cows moves through the pine forest about 40 yards to my left. They are out of bow-range but it is good to see some activity. My eyes almost pop out of my head as one of the ponies comes trotting thru. After all these years you would think someone would get used to this. I guess you just have to experience it to appreciate its shock value. As mentioned earlier, if you stand hunt at Assateague, you have to be constantly scanning your area. I have had sika sneak up well within bow-range without making a sound. This is ex-

actly what happens next as a good size cow moves in quickly from my right rear. This has got to be the worst-case scenario. Not only do I have to grab my bow from its hanger, I have to rotate about 180 degrees to get to a good shooting position. With my ballet move completed, all that is necessary now is to wrestle with all my clothing and make a well-placed 25-yard shot without being detected. Now at full draw, just a few more steps and there should be a clear shot. It is not a perfect shot, maybe a little low, but it looks like both lungs. I try to keep an eye on her as she races through the pines. Luckily enough, I see her go down on the dead run about 60 yards away. This is very relieving, since trying to bloodtrail through the marsh and thickets can be a nightmare.

Now the real work begins. With a small pack, tree stand, strap on steps and bow, it was a pretty good workout coming in this morning, now try adding another 50 pounds that has to be dragged out. Muscles burning and sweat dripping, it is a sweet sight to see my truck parked on the beach. It feels great to have a beautiful drive back to the ranger station after a successful day. All that is left to do now is sign out and have the sika weighed. The rangers are very helpful and are genuinely happy to see a successful hunt.

If you have never been to Assateague, plan to come for several days. Camping is available year round at bayside and oceanside campgrounds. It is not unusual to hear a big stag bugle after dark. Also, bring a surf rod for fishing at the beach. Fall is a great time to catch a monster rockfish, although flounder and bluefish are still plentiful this time of year. Fresh fish grilled at your campsite is something you will not forget. If you are looking for a truly memorable experience, try hunting sika deer at Assateague. It's an adventure you will not forget. □

*David Judd was born and raised on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. He is a lifelong outdoorsman, bowhunter and avid triathlete. Bowhunting sika is one of his favorite outdoor pursuits. David left a 15-year career in aviation to pursue a career as a wildlife photographer/writer.*





# Journal

## 2006 Outdoor Calendar of Events

**August 2:** *Flat Out Catfishing Clinic* on James River, Richmond. For more information call 804-367-6778.

**August 18-20:** *Mother Daughter Outdoors* at Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center in Appomattox. For more information call 804-367-0656.

**September 30:** *Fly Fishing Workshop* at Riven River Park in Harrisonburg. For more information call 804-367-6778.

**October 14:** *Family Fishing Workshop* at Bear Creek Lake State Park in Cumberland County. For more information call 804-367-6778. □



## An Unfortunate Party

by Jennifer Worrell

Game Wardens Gabe Watlington, of York County, and B.I. Bell, of Williamsburg/James City County, were working undercover during dove and goose season this past September. They stationed themselves near two gentlemen hunting on federal property and proceeded to pretend to hunt. The men nearby saw the wardens and invited them over to join their hunt. Watlington and Bell refused at first, but then, as they noticed the two hunters growing more jovial by the minute, they decided to pay the men a visit. The wardens immediately noticed discarded trash and alcohol containers lying about. After exchanging pleasantries with the hunters, Bell and Watlington re-

vealed their identities and wrote the friendly hunters a few tickets.

To all sportsmen out there: if you are going to invite strangers to hunt with you, make sure you are following all regulations! □



by Beth Hester

*Hunting With Hank*

by Dez Young  
2005 Bonasa Press  
ISBN: 0-9725594-5-0

Hardcover with illustrations and photographs  
A limited number signed by author and illustrator

*"If there are no dogs in Heaven, then when I die I want to go where they went."*  
—Will Rogers

The wildly popular OLN program "Hunting With Hank" ran for 67 episodes and developed a devoted fan base comprised of both hunters and non-hunting outdoor enthusiasts. Dez Young, along with his Llewellyn setter Hank, were goodwill ambassadors for the upland bird. Hank's brilliant field work was a joy to behold, and each segment displayed the highest standards of outdoor ethics.

Now fans have a new reason to rejoice. Young has set down on paper the story of how the television show evolved, and he has recounted some of the most significant and entertaining adventures. You'll travel along with Dez and Hank as they hunt spruce grouse, quail, pheasant and other denizens of the upland in some of the best locations.

Of course, the real behind-the-scenes story is the relationship between hunter and dog. Love, loyalty and instinct are woven together into a timeless tapestry. A word of warning: even the most seasoned veteran of the field will require a box of tissues for the final chapters.

*Hunting with Hank* features a gallery of favorite color photographs, and there is a listing of guides, outfitters and lodges for those who would like to follow in Hank's paw prints.

If you are interested in obtaining an autographed copy, you may contact Fair Chase Books in Lexington, Virginia by phone or e-mail: 1-540-463-9189 or fchase@localnet.com.

*Muriel Foster's Fishing Diary*

by Muriel Foster  
1996 Penguin Studio  
Hardcover in box  
Illustrated: Pen and Ink, Watercolor  
ISBN: 0-87341-350-4

If you are an avid fly angler or outdoor diarist, it would be well worth your time to seek out a copy of *Muriel Foster's Fishing Diary*. You'll have a hard time putting the handsome volume down. In fact, you might be so overcome with fishing inspiration that you'll be compelled to call in sick with "the fever."

Born in Surrey, England, in 1884, Muriel Foster captured her lifelong passion for fishing in an illustrated diary she began in 1913. Her last entry dates from 1949, when she was forced to retire from the piscatorial life due to severe arthritis. The only gap in the diary is a poignant period beginning in 1939 when she put aside fishing and drawing to help in the war effort by organizing a salvage depot in a local blacksmith's yard. Resumed in 1946, the matter-of-fact entry reads:



"May 14th. The first time I fished since the war. N.W. cold. Red Quill/4 Trout."

The Penguin Studio facsimile edition of Foster's diary is a lovely tribute to a bygone era and a pioneering fly angler. Along with grids of rivers fished and lures used, the substantial, cream colored pages are brimming with colorful and meticulous sketches of fish, flies, creels, dogs, wildlife and the stunning natural architecture of the countryside. □



Lee Walker

## Virginia Sportsman Show

Don't forget to mark your calendar and plan a visit to the 23rd Virginia Outdoor Sportsman Show, August 11, 12 and 13th at the Show Place, 3000 Mechanicsville Turnpike, in Richmond. What better way to start off this year's hunting season than with the chance to see the latest in new hunting gear, treestands, muzzleloaders, shotguns and clothing, take in some educational hunting seminars, and have the opportunity to purchase your new hunting licenses, while talking with some of the knowledgeable staff from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Along with plenty of fun activities for the whole family to enjoy, the Virginia Outdoor Sportsman Show will once again offer visitors a chance

to see the biggest bucks harvested in Virginia. Deer hunters throughout Virginia will bring their mounts to this prestigious contest to have certified judge's score and awarding ribbons and trophies, in four antler classes. And if that's not enough to ruffle your feathers then you might want to try your luck at the Virginia State Turkey Calling Championship or the Virginia State Duck & Goose Calling Contest. While you're at the show take the time to stop by the Hunters for the Hungry booth and make a donation to help feed some of Virginia's less fortunate or purchase a handful of tickets for one of their great raffle items.

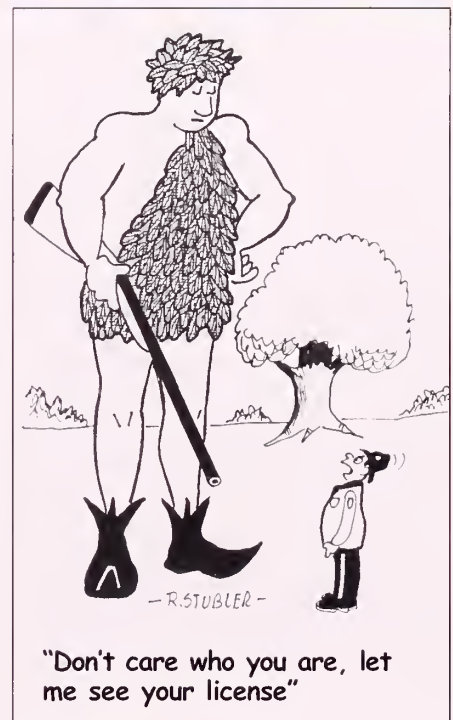
The Virginia Outdoor Sportsman Show is sponsored by the Virginia Deer Hunters Association and is the largest show of its kind in the Old Dominion so you might want to visit all three days. If you would like more information on the show or how to enter any of the contests visit [www.sportsmanshow.com](http://www.sportsmanshow.com). □

## New Deer Processing Video!

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is pleased to announce the release of a new DVD, *A Professional Guide to Field Dressing, Skinning and Butchering White-Tailed Deer*. This video was produced not only for youth and novice hunters who may not feel comfortable tackling the chore of gutting and butchering a deer themselves, but also for more experienced hunters who would like to take their deer processing to a professional level. The video begins with step by step instructions on how to field dress a deer as demonstrated by VDGIF Wildlife Biologist Ron Hughes.

Then, professional butcher and hunter education instructor Rob Bingle demonstrates the best way to cape out a deer for mounting. The video really gets good when he shows in detail how to de-bone and professionally butcher a deer using only a knife and a hacksaw. Sure, many of us think we know how to

process a deer, but seeing the way Rob does it with no wasted effort is well worth the price of the video. By the end of the video you will learn how to make butterfly chops, de-bone a front shoulder, tie up a roast using a butcher's knot, be able to identify all the proper cuts of meat on a deer, and more! This is one video you will watch over and over. The price is only \$12 each. You can order online at [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov) or call (804) 367-2569. □



"Don't care who you are, let me see your license"



# Photo Tips

by Lynda Richardson



## Disguising Those Big Lenses

**W**hen I venture out into the field to photograph wildlife, I dress as inconspicuously as possible. Not only do I select camouflage clothing to conceal my form, I disguise my equipment as well. In the early days, a roll of elastic, camouflage tape, used for covering guns, did the trick though it did leave a sticky residue on the lens as the tape slowly peeled away. When I recently bought a new Canon 500mm f4.0 IS lens, the first thing I thought, besides "holy cow, this is heavy," was "my, this thing is BRIGHT and WHITE!!!!" I would need a lot of sticky camouflage tape for that lens.

Fortunately for me, I discovered a wonderful solution for white lenses and sticky tape (and shiny black lenses as well.) At the recent North American Nature Photography Association (NANPA) Summit in Denver this past January, I was excited to see a new product called LensCoat™. LensCoat™ is a camouflage colored, 100% closed-cell neoprene covering which comes in several sections that you pull over the lens, one by one in an orderly fashion. It takes about 15 minutes to cover a large lens, and goes faster if you remove the footing on larger lenses. Clear, flexible plastic windows sewn into the neoprene allow you to see and move IS/AF/VR lens controls though it can be a little difficult to press through the plastic until you get used to it.

LensCoat™ is available for Canon, Nikon and Sigma lenses in sizes ranging from 200mm to 600mm with new models being added constantly. If you don't see a cover for

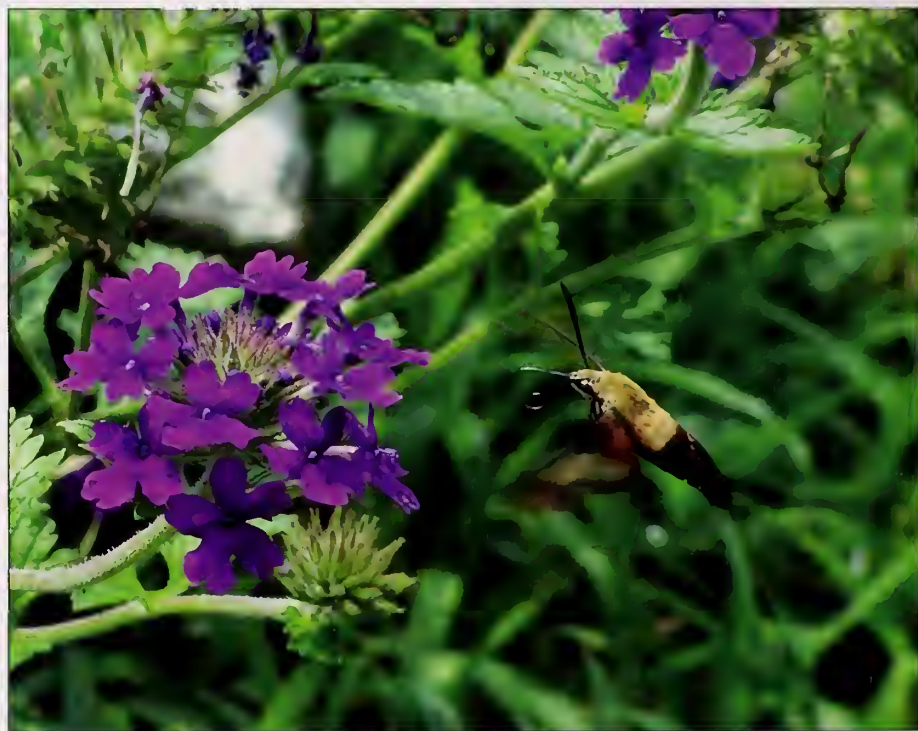
your lens, their Web site mentions that you should contact them ([www.lenscoat.com](http://www.lenscoat.com)). (I bet they'd make you one!) Prices range from \$19.99 to \$99.99.



©Lynda Richardson

If you want a nicely made covering to protect and conceal your lenses from wild subjects, then LensCoat™ is for you! □

You are invited to submit one to five of your best images to "Image of the Month," Virginia Wildlife Magazine, P.O. Box 11104, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA, 23230-1104. Send original slides, high quality prints, or high res jpeg files on disk and include a self addressed, stamped envelope or other shipping method for return. Also, please include any pertinent information regarding how and where the image was captured, what camera, film and settings you used. I hope to see your image as our next, "Image of the Month!"



Congratulations go to James "Jim" Shank of Cumberland, for his delightful photograph of a hummingbird moth visiting flowers in his garden. Jim used a Kodak DX7590 5.0 megapixel digital camera with a 10X zoom to capture this shot. Good spotting Jim!



# On The Water

by Jim Crosby



## Maps For Boaters

**M**aps for boaters? Is that a silly question? Everyone knows that boaters use marine charts, right. No, there are no marine charts for many inland lakes and streams that offer lots of recreational boating. However, there is an alternative. The inland boater can resort to topographic maps.

While topo maps have been around for a very long time, some recent technology has made them even more available. Would you believe that topo maps are now available for all 50 states on one DVD you can pop into your computer? They are! And, DeLorme's Topo USA, Version 6.0 has put them on one DVD disk.

Imagine, being able to plan a boating adventure with topo maps of the exact area or body of water you plan to explore. Knowing the detail of an area before you arrive offers a great advantage.

As outdoor recreation goes increasingly high tech, more and more boaters are looking for sensible technology solutions to help improve their planning, navigation and information sharing. DeLorme is meeting that demand head-on with its newly released Topo USA 6.0.

As its name suggests, Topo USA 6.0 covers the entire U.S. with comprehensive terrain detail—represented by elevation contours and shaded relief—all on a single DVD-ROM. This latest version builds on DeLorme's previous experience with mapping software. It delivers next generation 3-D, exclusive routing

and GPS capabilities, and the most up-to-date detail available in topographic map software.

Topo USA 6.0 introduces a new 3-D flyover experience, to scout the terrain for large areas from the comfort of home. Users adjust their viewing angle from vertical to horizontal, to follow a river or trail through valleys or canyons. They can also circle around a location from any compass point, or get an outward-looking 360-degree perspective from any point. The 3-D images can be viewed in split-screen, side by side with the regular 2-D map, or in full-screen mode. It's as close to being there as it gets.

DeLorme Aerial Data Packets (ADPs) are another rich source of detail. With their component aerial photos, satellite imagery, and genuine USGS 7.5-minute maps, ADPs provide an enhanced picture of what exists at any location—structures, agricultural lands, new roads and more.

Topo USA 6.0 also offers exclusive automatic routing capabilities. Users simply select their start and finish points, and the program instantly generates a route. If you prefer to go a different way, or create side trips, it's easy to override the program's choice using the "via" or "route avoid" features.

Routes can be quickly uploaded to a handheld GPS receiver for worry-free navigation in unfamiliar territory. GPS waypoints or tracks can also be uploaded. When the trip is over, users can download any collected waypoints or tracks. Down-

loaded tracks, whether self-obtained or from a third party, can be easily converted to routable paths. Like the ability to route on user-added roads or trails, this is an exclusive feature.

Topo USA 6.0 offers a full range of GPS options, including the ability to preserve on-device file names, comments, and custom symbol sets upon download from a handheld receiver.

Users can also preserve memories and observations by attaching photos and documents to the maps.

The program requires Windows (2000 SP3 or XP) and performs optimally on PCs with a 1.8 GHz or higher processor, 700 MB of available hard drive space, and a minimum 256 MB of random access memory (RAM). The National edition (\$99.95) is available on DVD-ROM only. East and West regional editions (\$49.95 each) are available on CD-ROM only.

As with any comprehensive software this one takes some time to learn to navigate through the options, however it does come with some great introductory help.

Look for Topo USA 6.0 wherever software, maps or outdoor recreation equipment are sold, or visit [www.delorme.com](http://www.delorme.com). For more information, call 800-561-5105. □

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*Please note: I always welcome feedback in the form of comments, questions and/or suggestions for future columns. You can reach me via e-mail at [jimcrosby@adelphia.net](mailto:jimcrosby@adelphia.net)*



story and illustration  
by Spike Knuth

## Boat-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus major*

**T**he boat-tailed grackle is a bird of the coastal saltwater or brackish marshes and islands. Seldom are they found inland except up tidal rivers. They commonly feed alongside sandpipers, willets, oystercatchers, herons, ducks and brant on sandy beaches, mudflats at low tide, or along marsh edges. Its harsh, raucous calls may be the first thing you notice. They are made up of a variety of chattering, squawking and whistled notes and squeaks. Most common is the quick, harsh, "jeeb-jeeb-jeeb," or rapid "check-check-check."

The males measure about 16 inches and are glossy black-violet on the head to deep blue on breast and back or even bluish-green, iridescent in the sun. Its light yellow iris is conspicuous. The females are much smaller at 11 to 13½ inches, with dull dark brownish backs and light brownish undersides and whitish throat.

Courtship rituals by the males include much feather fluffing, wing drooping and tail spreading. Boat-tails nest from April through June in groups or colonies in live oaks, water oaks, wax myrtles or other marsh vegetation, sometimes as high as 40 feet. The large bulky nest is constructed of sticks, bark strips, mosses and other dried marsh vegetation, usually with a coating of mud on the inside providing for a strong structure. Three to five eggs of varying shades are laid and are marked with browns and black. The males leave as soon as the females begin incubation and go off to gather in flocks, often in the company of fish crows. The eggs hatch in 14 to 16 days. Only the female is involved in the rearing of the young.

The boat-tailed grackles feed on aquatic and terrestrial insects, snails, shrimp, small crabs, small frogs, worms, eggs of horseshoe crabs and diamond-backed terrapins, some fruits and corn. They walk about very deliberately, almost elegantly like a show horse. They will eat corn if planted within their range. Their

flight is rapid and prone to sudden turns or drops and even hovering.

Boat-tails are birds of the South Atlantic and Gulf Coasts including all of Florida, including the freshwater marshes there. It is, however, moving its range northward into the Mid-Atlantic. A similar species, the great-tailed grackle is found along the Gulf in Louisiana and Texas. □





# OUTDOOR CATALOG

## Summer Sizzler



### 2006 Limited Edition *Virginia Wildlife* Collector's Knife

This year's knife has been customized for us by Buck Knives. Each knife is individually serial numbered, and comes with a distinctive rosewood handle and gold lettering. This year's knife also includes two white-tailed deer etched on the blade. This custom knife not only comes with a leather sheath, but also a custom made solid, cherry box with a decorative wildlife scene engraved on the cover.

Item #VW-406 \$85.00 each



# VW-503



# VW-502

### Buckles

Our bass and duck belt buckle collection is crafted of solid pewter with *Virginia Wildlife* engraved at the bottom. Each buckle comes in a custom gift box with the VDGF distinctive logo displayed.

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Item #VW-502 Bass VW-503 Duck  
NOW \$5.00 each



### 2005 Limited Edition Collector's Plate and Stein

This collectable is titled "Cardinal in the Pines" and was taken from an award winning photo by Douglas Graham. Each plate and stein is individually serial numbered and has the year of issue identified on the back.

~~Plate \$22.95~~  
~~Stein \$16.95~~

Item #VW-5200 NOW \$29.00 for pair



### Limited Edition Collector's Plate and Stein

This collectable is titled "Winter Comfort" and is taken from an original painting by Bob Henley. Each plate and stein is individually serial numbered and has the year of issue on the back.

~~Plate \$22.95~~  
~~Stein \$16.95~~

Item #VW-5000 NOW \$29.00 for pair

### Our *Virginia Wildlife* collection of Pulsar Watches by Seiko



From the Ladies Pulsar collection. This attractive watch has a gold tone bracelet with gold tone hands and markers on a champagne dial. Water resistant.

~~\$59.00~~ each

Item #VW-302  
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From the Pulsar Nightfall Line. TiCN plating, gold tone crown, hands and markers and black dial. Water resistant.

~~\$59.00~~ each

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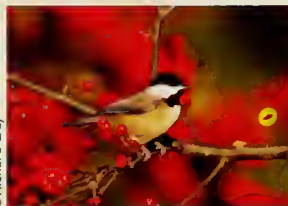
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